

Creating a common vision for a national surveillance system

Specific activity area being addressed by this action plan

National surveillance system vision

Safeguarding review recommendations covered

The following recommendations are addressed either directly or indirectly by this action plan. Design elements of a national surveillance system will be assured inclusion when they are part of the vision.

#15: Create a common vision and sense of urgency for surveillance within APHIS-VS.

#4: Develop ongoing quality assurance and continuous improvement plan for evaluation of the effectiveness of the national surveillance system.

#7: Ensure the design of the national surveillance system provides early detection of emerging diseases to allow for an appropriate and timely response.

#8: Ensure that the design of the national surveillance system incorporates foreign animal disease surveillance needs.

#9: Ensure the design of the national surveillance system incorporates endemic disease surveillance needs.

Issue group findings

The issue group agrees with the safeguarding report regarding the lack of common vision within VS for a national surveillance system. Traditionally, surveillance has been associated with collecting diagnostic samples for specific disease conditions and tracing infected/exposed animals or groups of animals; surveillance has been carried out as separate program activities. While the need to develop a national surveillance system has been informally discussed by several units, there has been no organized dialogue about a national surveillance system within VS. A common vision will help VS move from the traditional view of surveillance and also integrate the ideas of those who have given some degree of thought to a comprehensive and integrated surveillance system. A common vision is imperative and needed sooner rather than later.

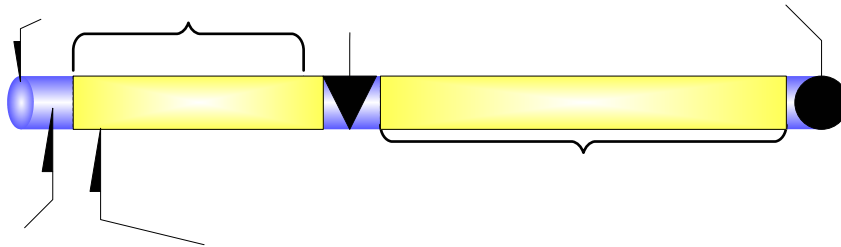
A vision must be crafted, tested, communicated, acted on by agency leaders, and incorporated into each employee's daily activities. The vision must be communicated to other parties who have a stake in an animal health national surveillance system. Visions must be periodically reviewed and revised. APHIS has access to communication and public relations specialists, writers, graphic designers, and others with skills in crafting and testing messages. Some of these resources are in VS, but the bulk resides in Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA). These are critical resources for the successful implementation of this action plan.

Although this action plan focuses on APHIS-VS, the full range of national surveillance system stakeholders must have input and support the vision. The steering committee will provide the lead role in gathering stakeholder input and support.

The issue group notes that developing and sustaining a sense of urgency about surveillance will not be easy. People are experiencing the impact of multiple emergencies that have direct impact on their day to day experience, e.g., being sent to other locations, having regular work undone because of the needs of rapid response, etc. Such emergencies may become “routine” and VS values may continue to emphasize quick response capacity at the expense of continuity and sustainability of core functions, i.e., surveillance.

Proposed actions

The key actions are outlined in the diagram below. These actions implement recommendation #15 as written, and assure the implementation of additional recommendations through integration of the concepts into the vision statement. A common vision message will include elements that are found in recommendation #s 4, 7, 8, 9. . **A part-time, temporary public relations specialist has been hired to assist with the development of a common vision. An early draft of this action plan is currently being used to guide the development of a common vision.**



Implementation plan

Tasks

Step 1 Craft initial message - The action steps begin with developing a message, involving text and graphics, which captures the essence of the vision. The VSMT should charge the national surveillance coordinator with developing a vision document as a starting point for discussion with VS and other national surveillance network partners. The charge should include message concepts and direction that are supported by the VSMT. Key elements in such a message have been discussed by the issue group and include:

- an understanding that implementation of a national surveillance system is a transition from current surveillance activities to a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated surveillance system and will require time, resources and commitment

- an understanding that the national surveillance system will continually evolve through an ongoing process of evaluation and refinement (i.e. there is no end point, per se),
- a clarification of the purposes of surveillance: rapid detection of introduced diseases and emerging issues, monitoring and providing actionable information for endemic diseases, and measuring regional prevalence of trade-significant diseases
- an understanding that the national surveillance system functions through an information and organizational infrastructure with well defined and integrated components,
- an understanding of responsibilities and authorities at all levels of VS
- an elevation of the importance of surveillance to the level of “response”
- the recognition that although VS must provide leadership for achieving the national goals of surveillance, these goals cannot be achieved without a well coordinated network of other animal and public health resources, domestic and international
- the creation of a link between the vision and actions observed on a daily or regular basis.

The initial crafting of the vision should be accomplished by the national surveillance coordinator and the national surveillance unit. This step can receive support and guidance from Legislative and Public Affairs.

Step 2 Create a link between message and experience - VS Management Team must reinforce the message with concrete actions that are visible to VS employees. Any vision must be reinforced by actions, that is, people must see that the vision is being acted upon by those who want others to believe in it. It is only by having the vision made visible that VS employees will know it is “real,” not simply words. Several key actions have already been accomplished or initiated. They are the establishment of the national surveillance coordinator, initial staffing of the national surveillance unit and formulation of the national surveillance steering committee. The VSMT must commit the necessary resources to these vital components of the national surveillance system. The actions and rational must be communicated to VS and key stakeholders in the national surveillance system.

Step 3 Test and modify message - A series of interactions to refine the vision must be initiated between VS employees, LPA, the national surveillance coordinator and the issue group. As stated in the safeguarding report, *“Defining this (the national surveillance system) is a collective venture that must have the highest priority. All those involved with surveillance, from field veterinary officers and animal technicians to involved industries and beneficiaries, must be included in building consensus around a shared vision”*. VS employees understand a vision in the context of their day-to-day experience. These day-to-day experiences are very different if the person works as a VMO in the field, as a data entry clerk, as a NVSL pathologist, etc. One message size will not fit all. Tailoring the message can occur in a number of ways and include the use of email lists, informal or formal focus groups, access to people attending meetings and conferences, etc. Again the assistance of LPA will be sought in this process. Participation from employees on

realistic goals, on concrete examples, on ways to contribute to the national surveillance system is essential. Structuring that participation in a productive manner is a central part of creating a vision that the VS population will share. The national surveillance coordinator and national surveillance unit should plan and facilitate these interactions.

Step 4 Incorporate message into regular communication - The vision must be incorporated into routine agency communication. As a specialized topic, it will be difficult to convince VS workers that surveillance is “everybody’s business”. For it to be so, surveillance has to be tied to VS’ other activities and to its overall mission. A vision can be reinforced or contradicted by actions; it can be energized by the updating of realistic goals or it can drop into a pile of unused images; it can be highlighted and made prominent or drowned out by other, perhaps equally insistent, messages. A surveillance performance element should be developed for all VS employees who will have a role in the new surveillance activities. The responsibility will lie with the VSMT and with other managers to continually reinforce the fundamental importance of the NSS.

Step 5 Update message on a regular basis - The articulation and reinforcement of a common vision for the national surveillance system must be ongoing. Assessment and modification of the vision should occur periodically. This calls for ongoing dialogue within VS led by the national surveillance coordinator, and with the steering committee and national surveillance unit. Strategies assuring that reinforcement of the vision continues into the future should be developed by the national surveillance coordinator, the steering committee and the national surveillance unit with the guidance of LPA.

Accountable individual/group

The national surveillance coordinator will provide the leadership in crafting, testing, communicating, and acting on the vision.

Other key players

The VSMT will communicate and initiate actions reinforcing the vision. The national surveillance unit will lead common vision interactions and exchange of ideas with all segments of VS. LPA will provide technical services in crafting, testing and communicating the vision. The steering committee will test and communicate the vision with their constituents. Ultimately it will be the responsibility of each VS employee to integrate the vision into daily activities.

Resources needed

Budget (table 1.): \$15,000 during first six months for travel required to test and refine the vision with various groups. Technical expertise will be provided by LPA, or by a private contractor. A contractor may be considerably more expensive than LPA.

Estimated budget for creating a common vision			
Resource	budget		
0.5 FTE LPA GS11/12	\$39,997		
Travel	\$15,000		
	total	\$54,997	
Table 1.			

Statutory/regulatory impacts

There are no anticipated statutory or regulatory impacts associated with this action plan.

Political sensitivities

Some of the information necessary for analysis and tracing has been considered confidential by producers and other livestock industry segments. Developing the common vision for national surveillance will demand an awareness of concerns regarding confidentiality and legal authorities.

Sequencing

Creating a common vision is one of three key and related actions that initiate the transition to the national surveillance system. The implementation of this action plan is dependant on the establishment of the national surveillance coordinator and national surveillance unit. Greater dissemination of the vision and wider input is dependant on the establishment of the steering committee. The “vision” will change over time, but there must be a common starting point. Recommendations #4, 7, 8 and 9 are addressed in both this action plan and the action plan for creating the national surveillance unit. Incorporating these recommendations into both the vision and mission of the national surveillance system will ensure that these design recommendations are met.

Partnering/cooperation/communication

This particular action plan is not limited to VS, it is assumed that other groups, such as the steering committee, will become involved in the dialogue around vision, goals, actions. A shared vision will facilitate surveillance activities as all are focused on the same goals.

Expected outcome and performance indicators

Please see appendix.

Linkage to VS Strategic Plan

This action plan is consistent with Goal 2, Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 of the VS strategic plan.